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CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES

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CONTACT: Nick Papas (Angelides)
916-651-6088
Stephanie Burri (Chan)
916-319-2016

CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES, ASSEMBLYWOMAN WILMA CHAN URGE GOVERNOR TO PROVIDE HEALTH INSURANCE TO EVERY CALIFORNIA CHILD

Days Before Governor's State of the State, Budget Release, Angelides and Chan Urge Governor to Keep His Promise to California's Children

OAKLAND, CA – California State Treasurer Phil Angelides, Assemblywoman Wilma Chan (D-Oakland), Chair of the Assembly Health Committee and Ralph Silber, Executive Director of the Alameda Health Consortium today called on Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to keep his promise to California's children and ensure no child in the state is without health care coverage. The renewed call for action comes days before Schwarzenegger's State of the State Address and one week before the release of the Governor's budget.

In 2005, Schwarzenegger vetoed Assembly Bill 772, legislation by Assemblywoman Chan that would have extended health care coverage to the more than 800,000 California children who lack health insurance. Schwarzenegger's veto followed his 2003 campaign, in which he said, "We have to make sure that every child in California is insured. That is the most important thing."

"The richest state in the wealthiest nation in human history should not allow nearly one million of its children to go without affordable health care," said Angelides. "It's time for Governor Schwarzenegger to make good on his campaign promise and ensure children in California never lack the medical care they need and deserve."

Since the governor's veto, Assemblywoman Chan has met with the Schwarzenegger Administration and has expressed her desire to work together to get the job done this year. "I am hopeful that over 800,000 of California's children will not go another year without healthcare coverage," she said.

Assembly Bill 772 called for the creation of the California Healthy Kids program and would have provided health insurance options for every uninsured child in California through California's Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children programs. Additionally, AB 772 would have made it easier for children who are already eligible to enroll and stay enrolled in a health insurance program, by harnessing recent technological advances and reducing bureaucratic paperwork. Statewide, Healthy Families currently insures 750,000 California children and is supported by the state and federal government, with the state government covering 35 percent of the cost of the program.

In addition to reducing expensive visits to the emergency room and providing a safety net against catastrophic medical emergencies, children with insurance have better access to care and experience a 25 percent improvement in overall health. Children who have health coverage also have a better chance to succeed in school. In 2002, the Assembly Select Committee on California Children's School Readiness and Health held a series of hearings and reported that healthy children attend school more regularly and established a direct



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correlation between student absenteeism rates and academic performance. Additionally, when children start school healthy they are ready to learn. Children with health insurance see a 68 percent improvement in “paying attention in class” and “keeping up with school activities.”

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